

A CONFERENCE

BETWEEN A

BENSALIAN Bishop and an *ENGLISH* Doctor,

CONCERNING

Church-Government.

Shewing the difference betwixt that of

BENSALIA,

AND THE

Church of England.

Together with a

LETTER

FROM THE

Bishop of *Bensalia* to the Archbishop of *Canterbury*, in order
to the healing of our Church-differences.

Being part of the History of a *Terra Incognita* lately discovered in a Voyage by the North-East to *China*.

LONDON,

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FROM THE

Bishop of London to the Archbishop of Canterbury in order
to the settling of the Church Government
Relating to the History of a Year past and how the
country is being governed by the Bishop

LONDON

Printed by J. G. Smith and J. G. Smith, at the
the end of the Church Government, and in the
on London, at the end of the Church Government

The Conference between a Bensalian Bishop, and an English Doctor concerning Church-Government, &c.

I Was cast upon that happy Country of *Bensalia*; amongst other Discourses I had with several persons of note and eminency in their respective faculties and functions; as I was one day in Conference with an ingenious and worthy Physician, whose acquaintance I had contracted, comes a Messenger with a Letter from the Bishop of *Bensalia* to the Doctor; the main scope of which was, That whereas he perceiv'd that those *English* strangers were so highly favour'd as to have that Indulgence granted by the King and Council, to inquire into and make their remarks upon the Laws, Government, Customs, &c. of their happy Country, more than ever was yet permitted to any strangers before: Therefore was desirous to discourse us; so urg'd him to bring us along, and particularly the *English* Physician on the day following to dine with him. At which news I was not a little glad, that I might have such an opportunity (unsought for, yet desired by me) of conversing with one of those wise, grave Seniors.

I askt the Doctor if the Bishop of that great place (being the Metropolis of the Country) was a Lord? he answered, No: For they lookt upon Christs Kingdom not to be of this world, or at least that that Kingdom of his which is to be attended with grandure, is not yet come. I queried further, with what state he was attended? Not (saith he) as the Lord Bishops are in *England*; yet hath a plentiful allowance and servants sufficient to attend, but in no great pomp or splendour. For (saith he) they judg in themselves, that they are here to partake of the Humiliation of Christ, that so they may the better be fitted for their Exaltation with him in his glorious Kingdom, when it shall come. But (adds he further) I suppose the Bishop may take liberty himself further to discourse these things to you. Only take notice (which he perhaps may not acquaint you with, lest he be thought guilty of ostentation) that he and other Bishops of this happy Country are very hospitable and charitable; (I was going to say to strangers, but that we have so few, that as to that matter not worth naming; however) to the poor; I mean not to beggars, for we have none (in all our Country) come to any of our doors; but to the poorer sort of Families who live about them, and to the binding poor mens children Apprentice, and putting others of them to School, (although care is most what taken of them by publick stocks to maintain publick Schools, Work-houses, or Manufactories, which are constantly supply'd at the charge of the King and his Sophy.) However in every respect, wherein they are in a capacity of shewing charitable acts, they are not at all wanting. Yea, it's part of their study, how they may find out occasions for charitable offices; and for their piety and exemplary lives, are had in great estimation, and reverenc'd by all men.

The next day the Doctor call'd of us (according to his kind offer) and took us in his Coach to the Bishops house; who expecting us, was in readines for our reception; where being (by one of his servants) brought into the Hall, the Bishop came, and with a comely grave countenance (yet somewhat smiling) saluted us, and told us we were kindly welcome, as should be shewn with all cheerfulness, according to his ability. After some previous discourse, the Dinner

ner came up. I observ'd the Bishop had no Chaplain, for he in person with a great deal of seriousness crav'd a blessing before meat. At Dinner the Bishop was pretty pleasant with us, askt us about many of our Customs in *England*, and concerning our King, what age he was? I told him as far as I knew, that he was about 46 or 47 years. I began (taking an occasion from the Bishops naming him) to magnifie and extol our King for the greatest Prince in the world. You mean (quoth the Bishop) in *Europe*. But take heed of *Bensalia*, as you will better know, when you come to see our King, and the grandeur of his State, which with that of *Solomon's* house and the *Sophy* (in relation to whom he is stiled *Preses Sophora*) is the most magnificent in the world, not excepting the world *Europe*. He asked with a cheerful countenance, what children our King had? I replied very modestly, I was not so well vers'd in our Court-affairs as to be able to give him any account thereof, only I have heard some say he had none; so beg'd his excuse in answering to that or other questions of that kind; whereupon smilingly he began some other matter of discourse.

And (amongst the rest) askt me if many of our Clergy-men were not Good-fellows (as you in your own Dialect (saith he) improperly enough call such.) I told him, if any, surely they were more than should be, and more than became the gravity of that worthy function. Come (saith the Bishop) you are very modest, I commend you for your cautiousness in speaking any thing against your own Country-men. I thank him for so good an opinion he had of me. Come (saith he) you may speak out here, drollingly telling me, we were out of their hearing. For we know (saith he) the state of your affairs, both as to what relates to your Court, Clergy, as other grand affairs, as well as you can tell us; only I am willing (for discourse sake) to ask questions, and to be a little further satisfy'd in the truth of what we already have received. I told him, seeing it was so, I could neither add nor diminish to, or from the vertue or viciousness of our own people. As to the latter, I could not but confess, that the more I convers'd with the *Bensalians*, and became acquainted with their Laws, Customs, Demeanors, justness in Traffick, civility in behaviour, and other worthy Endowments, the more I dislike'd, yea blush'd at our own. It's (quoth the Bishop) the part of every honest, vertuous, good man, to own honesty and vertue, and goodness, where ever he finds it; and that without respect, or any bias to Countries or persons, but where it's nakedly apparent.

Although there was plenty of dishes of meat well ordered, yet the Bishop eats generally but of two or three at the most. You see (saith the Bishop) I have a good stomach (I thank God) to my meat, I can eat heartily once a day, at evening some small repast, no Breakfast at all, take no Tobacco, nor drink I between meals, unless very thirsty; whereby I enjoy my health (I bless God) very well. And although our Physicians be (without doubt) the best in the world, as having the best Medicines that nature and art can afford, what of their own preparation in their Laboratory, and what is handed down to them from the *Sophy* (those *Adepts* and Masters of the greatest Hermetick Secrets) yet for my own part I had much rather enjoy my health, wherein I can by an orderly diet and temperance preserve it, than be sick to make trial of their skill. I commended the Bishops prudence in that matter, and wisht his president was exemplary to our *European* Countries. Why (saith he) you have excellent good Physicians amongst you. Yes, Sir, said I, but for all that we are somewhat of your mind, have no great stomach to be sick if we can help it. At which the Bishop smil'd.

When Dinner was over, the Bishop rose up, and return'd thanks himself.

A while after Dinner the Bishop betook himself into a withdrawing-room, and

and ordered one of his servants to whisper in my ear, his desire of my leaving the company to discourse a while in private with him, mean while had taken care the company should be entertain'd with discourse by the Doctor and some other persons. Come, *Sir*, (saith he) you may perhaps think somewhat strange of me for my pleasantness and cheerfulness at Dinner, I am usually so, to help the digestion of my meat, for I think it quickens and invigorates the ferment, (if I may borrow a word or two with you in your noble faculty) the ferment of the stomach oyls the wheels of the digestion, procures the most laudable nutritive juices, helps forward the circulation of the blood, and all this the better in order to health.

But now I am willing to be very serious with you, for I have some weighty things to acquaint you with, which when you return into your own Country, may perhaps (if our King and his *Sophi* do permit you the liberty of publishing thereof) be of great use to your people; who (as we are inform'd) are so much divided in their judgments and opinions about matters of Religion; we have the state of your Church-affairs (we think) truly represented to us, and wherein I shall err through any mistake, shall beg the favour at your hands to set me right.

My method shall be, first to shew you the rectitude and uniformity of ours, and the genuine consequences thereof, *viz.* peace, unity, Christian charity, and the exercises of other heavenly Graces. Next, how much yours comes short and deviates from ours; then shall shew you the reasons; and last (if we have time) shall propose some expedients in order to the healing your clashing differences, towards the ratifying a Christian union amongst you.

First as to ours, it is *Episcopal*, which rightly understood we have great reason to conclude from Scripture, and other Testimonies, to be truly Apostolical, and according to Divine institution; which with the Presbytery and other Substitutes, together with their modes of connexion to the people, are sufficient to the constitution of our Church. We have no universal Bishop or Pope, but only own Christ Jesus to be the supreme Head of our Church. Our Council of Bishops with some of the Elders or Presbytery, do determine all our differences, both as to Doctrine and Discipline.

2. And for the continuation and promotion of our unity and peace, we avoid all Scholastick disputations, and verbal janglings, as much as possible; as seeing it, by the doleful effects thereof throughout *Europe*, to be the bane of Christianity, the mother of dissention, animosities, contention and discord; yea, the very parent of all the enmity, and war found amongst those whom charity would enforce us to call Christians, whose lives and well-meanings more than the similarness of their opinions, must speak them Christians, or they will difficultly be found, having by such contentions even rent the seamless coat of Christ, the very badg of their Christianity, *viz.* Love, Peace, and Unity. We by a Law prohibit all disputes and controversies about Predestination, *viz.* Election and Reprobation, and other disputable Doctrines; as observing them to be the mother of many animosities and contentions amongst brethren; yea, and well remarking that no History can give us any instance of persons converted to the true Christian faith thereby; or of any (already converted) whose lives have thence been reeded better. But many Histories are fill'd with instances to the contrary. I call to mind we had once a learned Philosopher happen'd to be cast ashore on our coasts, who disputing with some of our Bishops, they notwithstanding all their learned arguments, although they might convince him (which yet was hard to make him or any (who stand out for victory) confess) yet they did not convert him, till a zealous Bishop (less learned

than the rest) in great power and demonstration of the Spirit, repeated to him the Creed, and (as I remember) the Lords-prayer; which done, queries the man, saying, Philosopher, dost thou now believe? who by such power being conquered, answer'd (according to *Naked Truth*) Yes, I do believe; and so became a Profelyte.

34. And because we would not offend our weak brethren, we dispense with many Ceremonies, which you of the Church of *England* (as we are well informed) are so stiff in defending, as rather than you will abate any thing therein, you will adventure the loss of hundreds, yea perhaps thousands of the weaker brethren, suffering them for the sake of some dispensible Ceremonies to depart from you by whole shoals, to the great rending of the unity of your Church, which by all means possible should have been preserved in the bonds of love and unity by your condescending to them in some things allowable both by Scripture and reason, as well as from the different *Genius* of people both as to time and place. As if the union of your brethren, and consequently peace of your whole Church was not of more value to you, than the stiff adhering to many indifferent and (in cases aforesaid) unnecessary Ceremonies.

If any amongst us be upon any occasion offended or dissatisfied, we make it our business presently to pour in oyl and wine (the *Samaritan* Balsom) to heal up the wound, using all the suppleing and soft means we can, by friendly visits, prayer, and all tender demeanor, to satisfy their scruples of Conscience, and like good Physicians never leave them till they be made whole. We beseech, exhort, admonish, and rebuke according as necessity requires; being instant with them in season and out of season. And as Fathers (for so in a spiritual sense we look upon our selves) we are tender and affectionate to them, using all fatherly admonition. We by our tender bowels of compassion melt them down, if they have the least grain of the Spirit of God in them; and they know right well, we make no prey of them, but as Ministers and servants of Jesus Christ, serve them in all we can. For we no sooner understand that any one is offended, dissatisfied, or hath done any thing amiss contrary to the Doctrine of our Church, if it be in such matters as renders them offenders of our Civil Law, we leave them to that Law (only take care (by friendly admonition for their souls.) But if in matters which relates to spiritual things, we (*viz.*) one of our Bishops or Elders, presently go to the dissatisfied person, whom we treat with tender bowels of compassion, and endeavour by fatherly admonition to reduce and reclaim them.

But if that will not do, (which seldom happens but our private, tender, and affectionate addresses to them, becomes effectual) then we admonish them publicly, which is several times perform'd. If it be about some new opinion that he would broach, and that he is very pertinacious in, we consult some of our eminent Physicians, or (if the case be high) some of our *Sophi*, to know whether indeed somewhat of *Hypochondraism* has not infected or tainted the mans fancy; which if they conclude in the affirmative, they take him under cure, and by rectifying the Humours, new moduling the spirits, and inverting, or reverting or expunging the dement and Irregular Ideas, (which they perform with a great deal of curiosity, (treating them variously according to the nature and different manner of *Hypochondraism*) return them well and sound to us : gain.

If any person has a new opinion, and keeps it to himself, and questions of that nature being askt him, he answers according to that opinion, only endeavours not to publish it abroad, we concern not our selves in that matter, but let him alone to enjoy his own fancy; yet we endeavour as occasion offers, to put him upon

upon more right and orthodox notions ; as being well satisfy'd, that as long as there is any variety to be found in nature, it will be discernable in the difference of thoughts and opinions of men ; it being as congenial to men many times to think variously concerning the same thing, as it is natural for them to differ in Physiognomy. We no more can always think or opine alike, than we can look alike. Faces and thoughts plead variety as their great and indispensable prerogative. Scarce two faces in the world are in every lineament and feature alike. Nor are there two men throughout the world, who have the same Identical notions about all things ; and indeed variety and disputableness of the objects of our thoughts, and understanding, doth truly solve the chief reason of our great variety in opinions.

But if the man designedly for ostentation sake, and to make himself popular, not only affects, but blazons abroad new opinions that are destructionable to the fundamental Principles of Christianity, if after private and publick admonition he be not reclaim'd, we pronounce the sentence of Excommunication against him, all other persons are forbidden any manner of Traffick with him, after a time (if still he persist) he is apprehended by a Bailiff of the Civil Law (which is our *Jus Gentium*) and at their Quarterly Sessions try'd, where (if he yet prove obstinate) he is ordered to the *staffee*, and thence at the next Shipping is transported to some of the Eastern Islands of *America*. But if he shew any token of recantation and penitence, he is received again (upon the reality thereof) into the Church.

4^{ly}. We have no vexatious Courts for Citations, Capias's, or Pleadings by Proctors, as your Church (to it's great disparagement) has. Nor is any person upon any misdemeanor to pay a peny of money, no charges plac'd to his account. We have a natural aversness to all money-mullets, for we think it the bane of any Church to be entail'd with such Courts and Officers as (like *Rome's* sin-scourgers) grieve the people either with imprisonment, or punish them with fines. For with us if a man be Excommunicated, as he is not own'd in common societies, so neither can he with all the moneys he has, buy off the Excommunication ; no, nothing will do it but a penitency, and humble submission, and then he is most affectionately receiv'd into the arms of the Church, without being put to one farthing of charge. If we should have such a Court, as that you call (how improperly let others judg) your Spiritual-Court, our people would fall off from us in spite of all our force and compulsion, and each competent number would make themselves Churches, to which our people would flock as fast as they do to your dissenting brethrens Churches, which we foreseeing, shall we hope, never be mindful to run our selves and Church upon such rocks.

5^{ly}. Our Visitations are perform'd twice every year, where we go in person to every particular Church under our care. Where our great work is (next to our earnest and serious admonition of them to love unity and peace (the main scope of all our Doctrine) to examine whether any particular Church be dissatisfied with the Pastor and Teachers we have plac'd over them ; and to know what such Pastors, &c. have against their people ; that so we may by all means possible reconcile their differences ; that if the people can justly accuse their Teachers of any debauchery or bad example in their conversation, upon sufficient proof and testimony thereof, the Pastor or Teacher is displac'd, sent to the *staffee*, and another more pious, sober, good man, of sufficient abilities, is put in by the Bishop, or propos'd from amongst themselves to the Bishop, which if approv'd of, is admitted and plac'd over them.

So that hereby we take care to remove all scandalous Ministers, lest they should offend, and by their bad example lead our people astray into bad practice ;

Bises, and lest others being dissatisfy'd thereat, should thence endeavour a separation, schism, or rent in our Church, which we study as much as possible to prevent; and if any of the people are refractory and of dissolute disorderly lives, we take care to admonish them, and if tender bowels will not do (which we by all means attempt) to chastise them with the threats of Excommunication and the *Staffee*. But we impose no fines or money-mulcts upon them at all, have no sorts of sin swindgers. Thus we endeavour to keep up the unity of love in the bond of peace amongst our people, the great and main scope of every Visitation, all true and faithful Bishops should aim at.

6ly. We (the Bishops) our selves always preach, sometimes in one, other-while in another place within our Jurisdiction. We are never idle, but desire to shew our selves true Over-seers, Bishops indeed over our flocks. We in our preaching and reading of Divine Service, which we have as it springs purely (without any adulteration) from the Gospel of Jesus Christ, always omit the Ceremony of the Surplice, as knowing that it grates against the natural *Genius* of our people, and therefore we wave it. And because many of our people are dissatisfied with the sign of the Cross in Baptism, we omit that also; and many are offended at kneeling at the Sacrament of the Lords-Supper, as thinking from our Lord and his Disciples example, that it was not of Divine institution; which therefore we for their satisfaction forbear. We impose no bowing at the Name of Jesus; but bowing at the Altar we wholly prohibit, lest we should in any measure admit of, or connive at the Idolatry of Popery (against whom we generally have a natural and inbred averfness.) Yea, in all dispensible Ceremonies, we set the doors of our Church so wide open, that all (who otherwise would be dissenters, and in fine would (in spite of us have Churches and Congregations of their own) willingly come in, and once in, most willingly would go forth.

7ly. We compel or force none in matters of Religion, as judging it to be a voluntary free action of the Soul in the exercise of things that relate to Heaven and happiness; as well knowing that if we should constrain people to acts of Worship, we could at the best (unless it was from a free act of their souls) but make hypocrites of them; as to which we think the prophane person (who has nothing of religious actions) more acceptable in the sight of God than such deceitful hypocrites, who only make Religion a stoking-horse for their worldly advantages.

8ly. We (the Bishops) study to avoid all height of honours; for our King would have made us Lords, but we beg'd of him that favour as not to confer such high dignities upon us; and that because we being men of like frailty and passions with others, were afraid lest that height of honour should ensnare us, make us forget God, turn dronish and careless shepherds; which we declare our selves to have so great zeal for the honour and glory of God, and good of the souls of our dear children or people, as we would not have any thing of that nature happen for the gaining all the world or worldly honours; lest neglecting our flock, we should impose on them other dronish, leud, scandalous teachers, whereby the flock would be scattered, and they seek or make other shepherds of their own, so quite break off and relinquish our Church; which breaches we dread; as also judging such high honours not suitable to the poor humble Ministers of Christ, in this our Pilgrimage through the wilderness to the land of peace, who are here to partake with him in the state of Humiliation, as we expect and hope to share with him in his state of Exaltation at the coming of his Kingdom; which very Kingdom we have always before us, as near approaching, the glory of which so dazles our eyes, as that it darkens these transient

sient scenes of temporal honours, eclipses the beauty thereof, and makes them only seem to us like a finer sort of Pageantry; which makes us careless of them, as also lest we should be in danger of Lording it over Gods heritage, and thereby should give cause of dividing and rending the seamless coat of our beloved Lord and Master.

And now (my Son) I must acquaint you with one thing, which strikes not so universally with the *Genius* of your people of *England*, as with ours of *Ben-jalia*, and that is concerning Musick in Churches. First therefore (as a foundation to what I have to say, and to make it less strange to you) I must tell you that harmony, whether vocal or instrumentall, strikes in so naturally with the *Genius* of our people, as what through their education and custom (and perhaps a private instinct peculiar to Countries, of which we can give no account) Musick or Musical harmony seems to be so congenial to them, as nothing more: every boy and girl in one sort or other, is train'd up with it; even Mechanicks are not ignorant of the grounds of Musick. *Vulcans* at their Forges, *Glassmen* at their Furnaces, *Shepherds* and *Shepherdesses* in their Tents, &c. upon frequent occasions strike up into Musical consort, and smite your ears with pleasant harmony. In the very Groves, and shady places, we have instruments of Musick almost like Organs or Pedats, which are set into motion by the air, or wind, and so contriv'd, that without any hands guiding them, they strike into pleasant tunes; the very birds are so sorted as they make vocal consort: *Wisd.* 17. 18. So that the whistling winds, the melodious noise of birds among the spreading branches, the pleasing fall of waters, and the rebounding Echo from the hollowing mountains, &c. (too tedious now to relate) all sound aloud, yea echo forth, and that sweetly too, the natural bent of our peoples *Genim* to Musical harmony.

Which considered, (and what was wonderfully done to the destruction of that terrible army of the *Moabites* and *Ammonites* which came against *Jehoshaphat* King of *Judah*, even by singing and praising God, we have upon record in the Sacred Chronicles, *Book 2. Chap. 20. v. 22.*) We were willing (for their further satisfaction, and to make Religion in its acts of Devotion not burdensome, and offensive, but to be perform'd with alacrity and cheerfulness) to appoint some choice musick in our Churches. Which musick is not perform'd by a company of leud, vain Quiristers, Boys and Singing-men, (who sing for money as your Ballad-singers do) such as you foster up to the great discredit of your Church-musick in *England*, and other places of *Europe*, which are indeed a great disgrace to so heavenly an ornament in the Church: But most of our people, even children from a dozen years of age, are able not only to set in, but also to go along in harmony with the Musick. Which they do (my Son) with such seriousness and gravity, as that it seems to be the most sweet and harmonious thing in the world. They are so raviht with that harmony as they seem to be wrapt up in it, even beyond all outward things, who thus in Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs, praise and magnifie God with such sweetness and wholeness of heart, and such praises to God are sounded forth in so great innocency of spirit, and sweetness of voice, as surely nothing is more delectable, next to the Beatifick Quire of Angels, and heavenly spirits in the full Cœlestial Chorus—

*Whose greatest work in height above,
Is only with joy to sing and love.*

Then he paus'd a little, as if upon the uttering thereof he had been wrapt up into a heavenly sweet extasie.

*His Spirit for a while seem'd to retire,
And he was gone to th' Heavenly Quire.*

At his return, I was afraid (Reverend Father said I) by any question to interrupt you at the first so serious, and at the last so sweet discourse, but that your pause and heavenly rapture gave me an opportunity to take you up as you were falling or retiring to the pledg (your body) left behind, and to acquaint you that your wholesome and sweet Doctrine, together with the harmony of your Discipline, has begot an ardent affection in my soul towards your so happy and concording Church, so assimilating and symphonizing with the Divine Angelical Chorus.

*Ab (quoth the Bishop) my soul was wrapt among
That heavenly host, who sweetly sing the Song
Of Moses and the Lamb.*

And indeed our mental people, as we call them, viz. such as are spiritually minded, and given up to high contemplation of the mercies, wisdom, and wonders of the most high God, are sometimes in such sweet concording harmony, even wrapt up well nigh into extasies, and have much ado to contain their divinely symbolizing souls within the narrow confines of their bodies. But to return :

We suffer no Jesuits or other Papist-Priests whatsoever to come amongst us, as well knowing, how spreading and contagious their leaven is and has been to those Kingdoms and Countries where it hath been admitted. Yea, it cannot easily slip out of our memories, what danger we had like to have been in both as to our Church and State, upon admission of an unknown Jesuit, who being in a Merchants Ship driven upon our Coasts, was suffered to dwell amongst us, and in a very little time he had so poysoned near a score of our people with his venomous leaven, which like a contagious ferment had got footing among us; and if that joint of our body-Politic had not been seasonably cut off, the Gangreen would in no great time have endangered the whole body. But by the prudence of our King and Sophi (we the Bishops not a little contributing) the grand Jesuit was apprehended and all his proselytes, who upon good proof being found to be such, were sentenced to the *staffee*, and thence for *Islands* near *America*. Only this liberty was granted to those of our own inhabitants, that as many of them as would return to their own mother-Church, and reclaim that of *Rome*, was to be received again, which most of them accepted. The rest, with the Jesuit, was speedily ordered for the *staffee*. And because it happened at a time that Ships were not shortly to go off, therefore to prevent further delay, a Ship on purpose was appointed to go away with them; and because they would not have other places (which are much peopled) hazarded by them, gave command to set them upon some Island remote from *America*. For although (quoth the Bishop) your Laws are so severe in *England* as to punish with death Jesuits that are so prov'd to be (which yet how duly executed you know best) yet ours doth not sentence any man whatsoever to death for his opinion in Religion. We think that Law of death to persons of different Religions not to be agreeable to the judgment, custom, or president of the Primitive Church of God; therefore we avoid it.

Thus (my Son) I have in short shew'd you the state of our thrice happy
Church

Church and Government thereof: only before I conclude this head, it will not be impertinent to touch a little further upon the nature or manner of our Church. For the Church I have been speaking of, is made up of living stones, well knit and cemented together, in every of which Christ by his Spirit dwelleth, and is thereby render'd a true Church. Our people which convene and are linkt together in Church-fellowship, are the Church, not the place of Convention. Which places of Convention or meeting-places, we do not call Churches, lest we should lose the Primitive and true sense of that name; but for distinction sake call them Convents, or in short Covents; which are built very conveniently for meeting, but are no stately Fabricks; nor is our Worship attended with any gaudry or any spiritual sort of pageantry, wherefore we wave all Surplices, Copes, Tippetts, Caps, &c. lest our people being amus'd with the external, should lose the internal acts of devotion; lest too much busied in their heads, their hearts should let go the main object: *Give me thy heart*, saith God, (not thy head or thy eye), and lest they should let themselves too much forth into the outward, they should leave nothing for God in the inward. Yea in short, lest our people (whom we always watch over with a jealous eye) by such spiritual shews in the external pageantry of Worship, should be drawn aside only to an outside Religion, and so should commit spiritual fornication, which we dread to think on; and therefore rather abate in Ceremonies, than to have them supernumerary.

And as our Pastors, Teachers, &c. avoid all pomp in the performance of all Religious duties, so likewise our people come not together in such gaudy dress as we hear yours do, who come rather as if they were to act their parts in a Play, than to such solemn Worship; in such pageantry of dress, as would more become their appearance in either of the two Parks, or a Masquerade, than their prostrate approaches to the footstool of Grace; more likely to beautifie a Comical scene, than such a solemn Convention. As to which, even many of your professors (who as more strict, should see and forsake the folly of the former) to their great shame are guilty herein. Is it not so (saith he) to me? I cannot (answer I) but confess (Reverend Father) to the truth hereof, and am much asham'd of it. Ah (saith the Bishop) how becoming and suitable to the profession of the Gospel is a modest garb; our people accounting the Graces of the Spirit in a vertuous mind the chief ornaments.

And now (my Son) to acquaint you with the result and genuine effects of our so happy Church, it is no less than love, unity and peace, and what can be expected more in any Church in the world? The glory of God, and good of Souls, being the main aim, and end of the Bishops, Presbyters, Pastors and Teachers set over the flock of Christ. What love we have to each other, and in what unity of heart and mind we are established, you may in part read in every family you come, and in every publick meeting and Congregation, whether upon matters Civil or Divine: For it's a great part of the work of our Teachers we set over them, at seasonable times to visit their people, and in Christian love to quiet and compose the differences, quarrels, or private animosities amongst them, by removing the causes, and bringing them to a right understanding of each other, studying by all mild and prudential means their reconciliation, nipping their feuds and quarrels in their first bud, so prevent their becoming publick.

As to the publick peace we enjoy, no people, Country, nor Kingdom whatsoever can vye with us, having now enjoyed great peace without any division, fraction, or schism, either in Church or State, for so many hundred years.

years. Tell me, I challenge you, what Country, Nation, Kingdom or States can glory of the like? It's true that of the States of *Venice* come the nearest to us of any known parts of the World, having had their Government unvaried for about 1400 years, which no Princes or Kingdoms in *Europe* can boast of. But yet they maintain their peace and unity at home by their Wars abroad; which very thing renders their peace the less peaceable; whilst we have no enemies at home or abroad to annoy or disturb our peace.

And thus (my Son) as I have in the first place shewed you the happy and florid state of our Church, with the amiable effects and fruits thereof; which like a wholesome and fruitful tree, whose leaves and fruits are for the healing of our whole Nation; So my next work (according to my propos'd method) is to shew you how your Church of *England* (as you call it) comes short of, and deviates from ours.

First, Therefore (my Son) although yours be Episcopal (which so far is well) yet you differ from us in your Head; and you see what little alterations made in Heads, whether Ecclesiastical, Civil, or Natural, begets great changes and alterations in all Bodies appertaining thereto. To instance first in Ecclesiastick Bodies: do not you observe that in the *Romish* Church, the Head thereof, viz. the Pope, doth, by his pretended Succession in *Peter's* Chair, to be Christs Vicar upon Earth, and as such assumes to himself that title (competible to no man but to our Lord Jesus Christ, who as God and Man is the true Head of his Church) of Infallibility; which Headship and Infallibility thereof, what influence hath it not, I pray, upon the whole? and how much (I would ask) doth that make their Church to differ not only from the Primitive Church of God, but also from all others in the world? We shall say nothing by reflection upon your Church, as it stands related to its head, leaving the suitableness of such a Head to such a Body, and the symmetry of the proportions thereof to your own consideration. And as to Civil, do not you observe what alterations, Tyrants (those monstrous heads) make in their body Politick. And lastly, as to the body Natural, what influence Cephalick diseases have upon the whole Body, is evident in Paralytick, Apoplectick and Convulsive maladies; what these slight touches upon things may hint to you, I shall leave to your further, and more leisure consideration.

2^{ly}. How much your Church of *England* differs from ours of *Benfalia*, by admitting Scholastick Disputations, and verbal janglings, your Universities, and many books of Controversie put forth by them and their dissenting Brethren, doth testify with what effects they have had, your late intestine broils, Civil Wars, yea and present animosities doth too much declare, and we fear (if not seasonably prevented) may eat out the very marrow and pith of Christianity (even love, unity, and peace) from amongst you.

3^{ly}. So much differs your Church from ours, wherein yours are guilty of offending their weak brethren, by strictly imposing upon them many indifferent Ceremonies, neither agreeable to Scripture, Reason, nor the natural *Genius* of your people, and thereby of making them sin by forcing to a separation and splitting of themselves into Parties, Churches, or Congregations of their own, is too evident in the sophisms and factions of *Presbyterians*, *Independents*, *Antibaptists*, *Quakers*, &c. of all which divisions, how much your Episcopal Church

Church (what through your stiff adhering to some dispensible Ceremonies, and through some other causes yet to be toucht upon) has been and is the Patron, let your speedy pouring in of oyl into the wounds of your offended and dissatisfied brethren, be (by the effects) the Judge. Do your Bishops and their Substitutes by friendly visits, prayer, and tender demeanor, endeavour the satisfying the scruples of Conscience in their dissenting Brethren? Do they by abating or cutting off their bill of Ceremonies at halves (which they may well enough afford to do) and by opening wide their Church doors, make way to take in those they have formerly so peevishly thrust out? And lastly, do they by their good lives, pious example, and other requisite suitable means, study the reclaiming of their dissatisfied Brethren?

4^{ly}. So much doth your Church differ and deviate from ours, by how much you indulge and keep up those Courts of vexation, call'd by you (improperly enough) Spiritual Courts. Your Citations, Excommunications, Capias's, Absolutions, all to get money with, we (except what we hear of you) know nothing of. An Excommunicated person of your Church may (so byass'd are you by gain) buy it off with money; which in our Church without repentance, is impossible to be done, and when done, it's without charge to the offender. Can your Bishops and their Vicegerents through a sound judgment in Spiritual things that differ, distinguish aright between these three sorts of persons, viz.

1. Those who are Hypochondriack, and thereby fall into different notions.
2. Those who for ostentation sake, and to make themselves popular, designedly blazon their new and lately coyn'd opinions diametrically opposite to the fundamental Principles of Christianity or Gospel of Christ. And 3^{ly}, such as truly out of a Conscientious zeal establish and confirm some Doctrines and Disciplines different from the received ones. Do they not only know (I say) how rightly to distinguish these, but also by proper expedients, how to reduce them to their proper Classis, and bring them to rights again? Do they not only know (of which they cannot well be ignorant) but do they likewise study to make it practical? and are they solicitous to satisfy your peoples scruples without putting them to a penny charge?

5^{ly}. Yours differ from ours in your Visitations; and that, first, your Bishops rarely visit in person as we do: 2^{ly}, Your Bishops Deputies search more into the faults and lapses of the people, than into the errors, debaucheries, and bad exemplary lives of their Pastors and Teachers; which is quite the contrary to what we do. And how much care should be taken for the purging and expunging all scandalous Ministers in order to the health, peace, unity, and welfare of the several Churches we preside, the difference betwixt our Church-State (where such care is taken) and yours (by the due consideration of matters now under discourse) will easily determine.

6^{ly}. Ours differ from yours, particularly in relation to the dignity and function of the highest Ministers of the Church; and that first as to dignity, yours are Lords, ours not; yours make sure of a Kingdom here, ours are as sure as they, but with this difference, ours is to come and only foresee it by faith; yours have it present, which requires not much faith, for that which is of faith is not seen. Therefore perhaps yours may think themselves on the surer side of the bush; however as to that Kingdom of Christ, we are willing to live by faith in view of it; and do not envy yours, their present temporal Kingdom.

27. As to the function, we the Bishops of *Bensalia* always preach in our own persons, which few of yours do, but by proxy, as we have the state of your Church represented to us; (contradict me in matters of fact if you can) being willing in every respect by our care, to shew our selves *Episcopi*, Overseers, Bishops indeed, and Pastors over our beloved flocks; one sheep in which flock we value more than a thousand (if there were so many) dispensible Ceremonies.

74. Compulsion in matters of Religion makes yours to differ from ours; for you compell and drive by force as much as you well can. But we compel not at all; and yet our flock by such soft tender means as we treat them with, is much larger, yea more secured and fixt to us than yours by your severer method, is, or in probability ever can be. For we chain them to us by our friendliness, Christian charity, and tender affection, shewn to them upon all occasions, by which we purchase more love from them than yours can ever do by all threats of Citations, Excommunications, Capias's, and other vexatious brow-beating modes of treating them; all which sets them more aloof off you, and confirms them more in their several Classis of Separation.

Thus our Bishops (good old and reverend Fathers are they) are not only afraid lest the pomp of the world should steal away their hearts from God, and they thereby should become dronish Shepherds, who thence should (not only) not feed the flock of Christ. but perhaps through idleness and the heaping up of worldly wealth, might give way to that error as to endeavour to hinder others from feeding the flock, whom God had fitted with endowments and gifts for that purpose; but also are afraid lest by too stiff maintaining arbitrary and disputable Ceremonies, they should give cause to the beginning of divisions in our happy and peaceable Church.

Now (my Son) what remains to be spoken according to my propos'd method, is next to shew you the reasons hereof; and lastly, to propose some expedients in order to the healing your long contracted differences in your Churches: As to the first of which you may (if you observe) take notice, that I have most what interwoven the reasons with the differences I have been acquainting you with. And that in the main the reasons of your differences and divisions amongst your selves, chiefly, if not solely, springs from the deviation of your Church of *England* from ours of *Bensalia*, as you may easily and with much perspicuity see in the lately quoted seven Heads, to which we have reduc'd the most remarkable differences and deviations of your Church from ours, which is obvious to any one who reads them. Which I shall here only in short recount, viz.

1. In your Head.
2. In your permission and indulgence of dubious Controversies and jangling Disputations.
3. In your strict imposition of dispensible Ceremonies upon your weak and dissatisfied Brethren.
4. By your upholding those vexatious Courts call'd Spiritual Courts, that newly furnished Inquisition, or Religious-house of Correction, where your sin-swingers from money-mulcts got by Citations, Excommunications, &c. raise their fortunes out of the ruins of your weak and distressed Brethren, whom you should rather pity, commiserate, and receive into tender bowels of compassion.
5. In your Visitations, by your scourging the people rather than removing bad

bad exemplary, and therefore scandalous Ministers, the great eye-sore of your people.

6. In that your Bishops, as to dignity, are Lords; and as to function rarely preach.

Lastly, By your compulsion in matter of Religion. In all which I say you differ and deviate from us and our Church-discipline. And therefore no wonder that you have not enjoyed those expected fruits (which we constantly possess) of love, unity and peace, but rather have been imbroiled in Domestick dissensions, animosities, and intestine Wars, the bane and reproach of Christianity.

For can you expect to gain the credit of being endowed with Christian charity, while you shew so much of a spirit of enmity, as to impose burdens upon weak Consciences, and not condescend (in matters dubious, and therefore indifferent) to the weaknesses of your dissatisfied Brethren? And can you think to procure a happy unity amongst your selves (which we always enjoy) while in the forenamed Heads you take away the very basis and foundation thereof? Lastly, can you upon serious consideration persuade your selves, that ever you shall possess peace, while you vex, disquiet, and sit upon the skirts of your Brethren in matters indifferent, wherein they ought in all Christian tenderness, not only to be received, but to be as well satisfied as your selves?

But I hast, lest your company will wonder what is become of us; therefore as to the last thing I propos'd to discourse, *viz.* to propound some happy Expedient in order to the healing your clashing differences, and towards the begetting a Christian charity and firm union amongst your discording Churches; which because it would be too tedious now to insist upon, as also would (I fear) too much intrench upon your Companies patience, I shall therefore refer to its due place in a Letter, which I intend (if it shall be permitted by our King and Sophi) to write to one of your Arch-Bishops in *England*.

To conclude, at present take notice (my Son) that I have not discours'd these matters to you without both the knowledg, yea and advice of our King and his Sophi, whose leave and consent we desire, before we discourse any thing of this nature to strangers. But in as much as you are (my Son) highly favour'd by them (more than any stranger that ever yet came upon our happy Island) I was (I say) not only permitted, but indeed advis'd to make this relation of the state of our Church, and to compare it with yours, that thereby you may legibly view the difference.

Whether at your return from us you may have leave to publish this relation in your own Country, in order to their good, I know not; as to which you are to wait our King with his Sophy's pleasure therein. Only this (on the by) I may take leave to acquaint you with, that none of your Country-men (that we call to mind) was ever before cast upon our coasts, except one, which was my Lord *Verulam*, whose stay in the Country was so short, as he took but a transient view, and therefore gave but a slight and imperfect account thereof to the world. Now in order to your more through information, I have perform'd my charge (and hope others according to their several incumbent tasks will do the like) and if it shall be permitted to come abroad, I pray God what I have said of ours, may become exemplary to your distracted Churches in *Europe*, especially to *England* (that happy Country, if they knew their own good), to which place we seem with a joint consent (I had almost said harmonically) to wish well, and to write the first copy after our original pattern; which (with a great deal of seriousness concluding) the great God of Heaven for his beloved Sons sake bless unto you, *Amen*.

Which

Which done, I made my Obeysance to the Bishop, and humbly thank'd the Reverend Father for his great condescension, love, and familiarity, in his late admirable discourse. As I was coming forth of the withdrawing-room, the Bishop thrust a heavy paper, well lin'd with red, into my hand : What mean you, Reverend Father, said I, the fee is rather due to you, for you have given the advice, while I have been your Auditor, and our Church your Patient. Come, come, saith the Bishop, this is only a small pledg of the kindness and bounty you are likely to partake of in this Country, and to shew you we are kind to strangers, and that we not only talk, but do. I return'd my humble thanks and acknowledgment of double obligation to the Bishop. Now (saith he) before we return to your company, I would only add, that if you shall have the honour of being admitted to discourse with any of the Sophy, those Fathers of *Solomon's* house, and Knights of the Noble Order of the Golden Fleece, I doubt not but they will give you an account of the greatest secrets and rarities, attainable in nature by art ; which will doubtless strike in you no small admiration, to view those wonders, and grand *Arcana* of nature and art, they are possessors of ; they being *Adepts* of the choicest secrets within the orb of Visibles.

Now (saith he) we will return to your Company. To whom he was pleas'd to make a short Apology for his absence ; having (saith he) had somewhat of great import to relate to your friend the *English* Doctor ; at which I hope you are not offended. Then we all acknowledging the Bishops free, kind and noble Treat, took our solemn leave and departed.

A LET-

A LETTER from the Bishop of Bensalia to the Archbishop of Canterbury, in order to the healing our Church-differences.

My LORD,

HAVING by the advice and consent of our King of Bensalia and his Sophi, had lately a Conference with your beloved friend, and your Country-man an English Doctor, (providentially cast upon our hitherto-unknown Coasts) about matters relating to ours and your Church, &c. who since that discourse, has been so highly favour'd by the King and Council, as to be indulg'd the liberty of looking into, and taking cognizance of the Government, Laws, Customs, and other grand affairs of our thrice happy Country, yea, has been thought worthy of taking a prospect of Solomon's house, that glorious fabrick of the world, and there to view the admirable improvements of Art and Nature to their utmost perfection they are capable of: And to whom the Sophi has been free to impart some of their grand Hermetick Arcana, (otherwise by Writers upon that subject, wrapt up in Hieroglyphicks, and other dark Enigmatical Characters) also has had conference with some of our Physicians, who doubtless for their high knowledg in the Theory, and great skill in the curing of Diseases, may without any affected Hyperbole, be reputed the best in the world. As to which, what advantage he may thereby reap in the influencing his practice at his return, will be afterwards known. What was then left imperfect in my late discourse with him, shewing the difference betwixt our happy Church of Bensalia and yours of England, in the late thing there propos'd, viz. the propounding some happy Expedient in order to the healing your clashing differences, and what might most tend towards the begetting a Christian charity, and love-union among you, is now I say the main scope of these lines. And indeed our King, his Sophi, and our Bishops, (men doubtless gifted with high and noble endowments from God) do all unanimously consent and concur in the matter of advice I am by their appointment now to propound to you, which is in the particulars following.

First, That you will set your Church-doors not only ajar, but wide open, by cutting off at halves, or rather indeed the whole bill of dispensible Ceremonies in your Church-discipline and Worship, no way essential to the Apostolical Doctrine of Christ Jesus.

2ly. That you will expunge or eject all idle, drowsish, drunken, leud, ignorant, scandalous Ministers, who in publick only serve to read over a Transcript, scarce daring to cast their eye off it, and whose evil examples, as they are bad presidents to the vulgar, and more loose, wickedly inclin'd, so they are also offensive and scandalous to the sober, good, and well inclin'd people, and thence become a great block of offence.

3ly. That in lieu of the aforesaid debauch'd or otherwise scandalous Ministers, you would admit of as many honest, conscientious, sober, judicious, vigilant and able Ministers (now as the present state of affairs are, belov'd) such whose Doctrine is sound, agreeable to Scripture, and the known Truths thereof, and whose lives for piety, are exemplary in all good Christian conversation.

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4ly. In order thereto, that in all your Visitations you have a stricter eye to the Doctrine and Morals of the Preachers, than to the demeanor of the people.

5ly. That all manner of force or compulsion be forbidden, whereby no other than soft, gentle, tender, bowel-like means may be us'd.

6ly. That you impose no heavy burdens in matters of Religion, upon the consciences of your people; but that that may be kept free, whose singular prerogative it is to be subject to God alone, as being his Kingdom and jurisdiction, and in the main solely accountable to him.

7ly. That the path to Ecclesiastical preferments may never be way-laid by interest, Symony, or other indirec^t courses; but that every man according to the merit of his conversation, learning, gifts, and qualifications, may himself (and not by proxy, interest, &c.) gradually ascend those steps of preferment.

8ly. That no one person have two Livings, nor no one able Preacher to be without one.

9ly. That you forbid all manner of disputes and scholastick janglings in controversial points of Religion; keeping a middle road betwixt the extremes of the severest Calvinism, and extravagant Arminianism, in matters of Election, Reprobation, and Free-will; rather acquainting the people with, and pressing them to the great necessity of their obedience to the requirings of the Gospel, than too much prying into the secrets of Gods council, preaching the Doctrine of Christ in the evidence of the Spirit, with demonstration and power.

And by this wide manner of opening the Church-doors, and the milder treats, you will surely find by a wise (but honest) stratagem, manag'd by a gentle and genuine method, the most of other sorts of persuasions (who at present are at a remote distance from them) brought over to be one with you. Those who will not hereby yet come in, will in probability be scarce more than two sorts, who still are to be treated with all gentle means imaginable. And because those who remain, are generally such as are much tutor'd and led by their Teachers, whose example and Doctrine doth strangely influence their proselytes; therefore your vein of policy must chiefly tend towards them; and that first in lieu of Citations, Excommunications, Capias's, Gaols, &c. by studying all manner of interweavings of interest and traffick with them, by making use of them in their imploy's (if they have any) or by kind invitations, inter-marryings of yours with their Sons and Daughters, thereby and other familiar treats to remove all bars or lets in communication (want of which is the very gate to prejudice, and private feuds) whence from a free intercourse, all strangeness, private heats, and animosities, (from not rightly understanding each other) will quite be remov'd, and they consequently reduced to a mutual firm unity, and Christian charity with you, the great end of all Christian conversation. Add to all which, if a score or two of the eminentest heads be taken off (not by an ax but) by preferring them to places of trust and repute, viz: either by conferring places of trust at Court, or making them Noble-mens Stewards, Subtreasurers, &c. will mightily win upon them, and put a stop to the current of the present animosities, the bane of Christianity.

Thus by your innocent and Christian-like policy, you may without a peradventure gain such a conquest over all your separated Brethren, as all the ruder and more severe methods in the world could (if complicated) never effect; and would thereby alter the whole series of affairs, make a new, but lovely scene of friendship, amity, and unity to appear; of the truth of all which by matter of fact upon trial, you would be abundantly satisfied.

Thus, my Lord, I have with great humility and sincerity perform'd my charge: And what other conference your English Doct^r has had with Masters of the Arts and Sciences, whom he has convers'd with; and what discourse has pass'd between him and some of our Doct^{rs} and Apothecaries, relating to the great improvements of the practice of Physick: As also what mutual intercourse he has had with some of our Sophi (those masters in wisdom) relating to the highest Hermetick Arcana, attainable by Nature and Art; he has liberty from our King and Council at due seasons to divulge; and what improvements may thence redound to your people, we leave to the future issue of time. If any scruples should arise wherein you would be further satisfied, concerning what I have said in the behalf of our so happy Church, the difference betwixt ours and yours, and expedients here propos'd; your Lordship may write it down, and send it to your English Doct^{rs}, who knows ways of sending to us, and you shall as speedily as may be receive further satisfaction. Mean while desiring that your people may be the first who shall write after our original Copy, I take leave and remain,

My Lord,

Your most affectionate and humble Servant

in all Christian Charity,

Theophilus Do-well.

FINIS.

My dear friend, I have been thinking of you very much lately, and wondering how you are getting on. I hope you are well and happy. I have been very busy lately, but I have managed to find some time to write to you. I have been thinking of you very much lately, and wondering how you are getting on. I hope you are well and happy. I have been very busy lately, but I have managed to find some time to write to you.

My love,

Your most affectionate and devoted friend,

in all Christian Charity,

Theophilus DeWolfe

FINIS

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